

Valdez House  
815 East 14th Street  
Brownsville  
Cameron County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3288

HABS  
TEX,  
31-BROWN,  
195

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20243

## VALDEZ HOUSE

TEX,  
31-BROWN,  
19 -

Location: 815 East 14th Street, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

USGS East Brownsville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 14/650890/2865470.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Luciano Valdez (1977).

Present Use: Private Residence.

Significance: The Valdez House, built in 1910, is a superb example of the type of small cottage typical of Brownsville in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The distinguishing feature of this small, clapboard structure is a full-length front porch, its canted pressed-tin roof supported by wood posts topped by semi-circular or fan-like jigsaw brackets, characteristic of Brownsville. Like many similar houses the Valdez House has a two-story addition attached to the rear.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: According to the Valdez family the house was built in 1910.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Valdez House is located on the southern corner of Lot 1, Block 115, in the Original Townsite of Brownsville. The following references to the title of this lot are found in the Cameron County Clerk's Office, Brownsville, Texas, and were traced by Pat Footer of the Brownsville Historical Association.

On April 29, 1902, George and Emelia Champion sold Lot 1 to Teresa Lozano de Valdez for \$300. (Volume M, pages 45-46.) This property has remained in the Valdez family since that time. The current owner is Luciano Valdez who acquired title to the lot in 1947. (Volume 429, page 181, and following.)

4. Builder, contractor and supplier: None known.
5. Original plan and construction: The house appears on a 1914 Sanborn Map of Brownsville. The one-story frame house with front porch, shown on the map, is practically identical to the present structure except that the two-story addition attached to the north corner of the house is shown, in 1914, as one story.

6. Additions and alterations: In 1926, the second story was added to the one-story addition at the rear of the house. A toilet lean-to at the rear of this addition was added in 1920. The wash room to the west of the house was added in 1967 after Hurricane Beulah.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. The Valdez Store was located at the east corner of 14th and East Madison Street, around the corner from the house. This grocery store is also shown on the 1914 Sanborn Map.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Brownsville Historical Survey Files, City Planning Office, Brownsville, Texas.

Interview with the Valdez family, 814 East 14th Street, Brownsville. The Valdez family built the house and still occupy it, and on August 10, 1977, furnished information about construction and the alteration to the house.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Sanborn Maps of Brownsville, Texas, dated 1894, 1906, and 1914, available in the Hunter Room of the City-College Library, Brownsville, Texas, and in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Prepared by: Betty Bird  
University of Virginia  
Project Historian  
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This modest frame home is typical of the small residences built in Brownsville in the early twentieth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This one-story, four-bay front, rectangular building is approximately twenty-seven feet across the front by twenty-five feet in depth. There is also a two-story ell added to the rear which is approximately twelve feet by twelve feet.

2. Foundation: Foundation is of brick piers.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The front, or original portion of this construction has wide wood siding, shiplap or German siding, with a wide groove just below the lip, painted yellow. The two-story addition in the rear has narrow board wood siding, with faded yellow paint. The rear wall of the main house and the toilet lean-to have board-and-batten wood siding. There are corner boards and rake boards on gable ends.
4. Structural system, framing: Structure is of wood frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The porch with its slightly canted roof extends across the full front facade. The wood floor is at the level of the newer, raised, concrete sidewalk, and there is a beaded wood panel ceiling. There are four simple wood columns with a molded cap and base. From the top of the cap to the ceiling line on each side of the columns there is a jigsaw, fan-like wood bracket. The simple wood balustrade extends across each end of the porch and between the end and interior posts, leaving the center portion open. The canted roof, extending at a slightly lesser pitch than that of the main roof, is covered with the main roof in pressed metal shingles over wood shingles, and has an open cornice with metal gutter across the front.
6. Exterior Stairs: There is an exterior stairway on the southwest side of the rear addition. This open-string wood stair has three steps up to a landing, where it turns and continues to another landing at the second floor which is supported by a wooden post. The simple wood handrail extends up on each side of the stairway and continues around the landing at the second floor.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are two entrances from the front porch, each slightly one side of the center line of the facade. The wood surround of each doorway encloses a wood-panel door, with a wood threshold and wood-framed screen door. There is also an exterior entrance to the kitchen on the two-story addition through a door on its southwest wall. This door has wood surround, wood paneling, wood threshold, and wood-framed screen door.

There is an exterior doorway from the lean-to toilet on the rear, with wood surrounds and sill and a board-and-batten door. The doorway on the second floor of the addition, at the top stair landing, has wood surrounds, wood threshold, and wood-framed screen door.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Wood windows on the first floor at the front of the original house have six-over-six lights here.

They have single-hung sashes, wood surrounds, and screens. At the rear of the house are wood windows that slide up into the wall and have a two-light sash. Wood windows on the second floor of the addition have two-over-two lights, single-hung sashes, wood surrounds, and wood framed screens. The raising sash is held in the "up" position by a small metal Y-clip on each side at the jamb.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof over the one-story original house is covered with pressed-metal shingles. The gable roof on the two-story addition and the shed roof on the lean-to toilet are covered with wood shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The open cornice has a metal gutter across the rear of the house.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor, original house: The right-hand one of two front entrances from the front porch (as one faces the house), opens into the living room. The entrance on the left opens into a bedroom. The living room has a window on the southeast wall, right of the door, and a double window on the northeast side of the house. A doorway on the center of the southwest wall of the living room leads into a bedroom, and a doorway on the northwest wall, in the west corner, leads to the dining room. The bedroom on the southeast or front wall has a window to the left of the exterior door on the southeast or front facade, and a window in the center of the side or southwest wall. A doorway on its inner, northwest wall leads to a lean-to bedroom. A small bedroom has a window on the southwest and northwest walls and a door on the northwest leading to an outdoor patio. The doorway on the northeast leads into the dining room. The small lean-to dining room has a window on the northeast wall, and a door leading to the kitchen on the northwest wall.
- b. First floor, two-story addition: The kitchen is the lower floor of the two-story addition and has a window on each of the southeast, southwest, and northeast walls. A doorway on the southwest wall leads to the exterior. A double doorway, on the northwest wall, leads to the lean-to toilet. The toilet has a small window on the northeast, a door to the interior on the southwest.
- c. Second floor, two-story addition: The second floor is reached by an exterior stairway. There is one room, with a triple window on each wall, and an exterior door on the southwest wall.

2. Flooring: Flooring is of narrow wood boards. Some of the floors are covered with linoleum.
3. Walls and ceiling finish: Some of the wooden walls have gypsum-board applied over them. Interior partitions are wood boards only--the entire wall having no framing members. Some of the interior walls have beaded wood paneling. Ceilings are of fibre-board with wood lattice battens. Ceiling in the kitchen and toilet is of exposed structure and wood boards.
4. Doorways and doors: Doorways have wood surrounds, wood panel doors, and wood thresholds. The double wood-framed doorway in the toilet has vertical wood-panel doors.
5. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Heating is by natural-gas space heaters.
  - b. Lighting: There are simple, electrical fixtures, and fluorescent light fixtures in the kitchen.
  - c. Plumbing: Modern plumbing fixtures are used throughout.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house facing southeast, on the northwest side of East Fourteenth Street, sits near the middle of the block with an alley on the southwest side. There is an apartment house across the alley and residential structures surrounding the house.

There is a brick-paved patio in the rear yard at the west corner of the property, enclosed by a wooden fence on the southwest and a small wooden utility house on the northwest. The utility house, in good condition, with a concrete floor, wood siding, and a shed roof covered with asphalt roofing has aluminum sliding windows.

There is another small wooden storage building in fair condition at the rear yard, behind the toilet with a shed roof and wood siding.

A concrete sidewalk at the edge of the front porch extends across the front of the property. A brick walk leads from the brick patio across the rear of the house and extends into a yard on the northeast side of the house. The side yard has some plantings in it.

Prepared by: John P. White  
Texas Technological  
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Project Supervisor  
1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Eilen Beasley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeiers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciela Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.